12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 O120 Tiwi O120

123 For a while we all stretched our legs walking up the sandy bank of the river until mangrove roots stopped our progress.

[226] Once back in the canoe, Albert took over my place in the bow and with his fish-spear poised he kept a watchful eye on the deep green waters. Once he spied a barramundi and cautiously directed Big Jack to paddle towards the large fish, but it glided out of reach.

About a half mile up the river we came upon the shaded glen of casuarinas, another camping spot with its fresh-water well, named Anderaningo. Here instead of Black Joe's mob we found the Superintendent, Bill Grimster, his son Billy, and two natives, Billy-Two and Brownie. Black Joe's mob had arrived the afternoon before and had been ferried the ten miles up river to the next camping spot in the motor launch. Bill Grimster, having been told by Black Joe that he had seen our smoke near Piriu, knew that we had camped there, and he came back down river with an invitation for me to join them for a night of crocodile hunting before they returned to Snake Bay.

225 For many people in this area, hunting the large salt-water crocodile is a profession or a sought-after sport. In both cases it is dangerous, for this particular species of crocodile is intimidated by nothing and frequently will attack men or beasts without provocation. The crocodiles, which often measure twenty feet in length, [773] occupy a prominent place in the myths, legends, and art of the [538] Tiwi, and many are the true-life tales of people who have lost their lives in battling these beasts, which are hunted by the natives for their meat and valuable skins. When one considers the size of the animals and the size of the canoes, it is no wonder that Bill had discouraged any requests of mine to accompany them. So this invitation was a most welcome and pleasant surprise.

123 I transferred to the launch for the up-river camp so that I would be in time to leave on the hunt at dusk. For the first six miles the river wound seemingly aimlessly through the deep, dank, and mysterious mangrove swamps. At times the branches almost met across the water, brightly colored birds flitted from branch to branch and a subdued splash indicated a crocodile disturbed from his after- [776] noon slumber on the muddy bank. Adding to this almost evil atmosphere were strange clacking and sucking noises emanating from

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 0120 Tiwi 0120

met at the water's edge by Black Joe, his wives, Margaret and Filicy, their two children, Dennis and Crissy-Boy, and the rest of his party numbering about twenty. Since it was already growing dark, we made a hasty supper and were soon back in the launch ready for the night's hunt.

I sat in the stern of the 15-foot boat with Bill Sr., while young Billy sat by the motor in the center holding the battery-powered searchlight. Brownie and Billy-Two were in the bow close to the long, heavy, iron-tipped harpoons. As we continued up river, I was carefully instructed as to what I should do. My instructions were to do absolutely nothing, not move, speak, whisper, nor hardly breathe once the signal had been given that a croc was sighted. Soon it was very dark, the stars were blotted out by heavy clouds, and it rained heavily for a short time. After a while, young Billy, who had been swinging the light slowly from bank to bank, said softly, "There!" and held the light steadily on the left bank. Immediately Bill shut off the motor and both he and Brownie took up paddles. Billy-Two meanwhile had eased himself up so that he stood straddling the bow, a foot on each gunwale. The harpoon was poised above his shoulder ready to throw. Extremely slowly and without a sound we approached the two shining red disks, the croc's eyes, held transfixed by the powerful light. When will he ever throw, I silently wondered; but it was not until we were within two or three feet that Billy-Two lunged forward and thrust the harpoon deep into the crocodile's back. Suddenly the silence was broken; Billy-Two wrenched the harpoon shaft loose and laid it in the boat, taking up instead the rapidly-disappearing rope attached to the iron barb. The crocodile sounded and began swimming under the boat. Young Billy gave the light to his father and took up the shot-gun. Brownie helped Billy-Two pull in the rope and suddenly the water broke. The light and shot-gun were aimed and almost simultaneously a shot struck the grotesque head; soon the animal was dead. All hands then heaved and the 14-foot crocodile was laid to rest at our feet.

The night was young, so we continued up river. After a while the moon broke through the clouds and silhouetted the white paperbarks. The river grew quite narrow and wound through a succession of mirror-black pools dotted with water-lilies and criscrossed just

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 0120 Tiwi 0120

under the surface by the massive roots of the paperbarks. It was in just this sort of pool that the largest of the five crocs landed that night, was harpooned. The huge 18-foot animal dived into the roots and it took about twenty tense minutes to dislodge and dispatch him. Aside from the crocodiles the only wild life seen that night was a small and very frightened little mouse who suddenly appeared on my lap and then just as suddenly disappeared over the boat's side.

We returned to Minianapi at daybreak and the hot tea and roast goose seemed a perfect breakfast, or was it supper? It didn't matter for we were soon sound asleep.

When we finally awoke in mid-afternoon we found the camp almost deserted. "Everyone go walkabout; kill geese," Albert informed us as he and Agnes gathered more wood to build up the smouldering fire. It was very quiet in the small clearing and only the little black spots of charcoal spaced in irregular intervals on the ground were evidence that there were more than our mob in residence. The clearing itself was quite bare because it had been burned by the first comers, with the double purpose of clearing out the four-foot grass itself, and any of the various poisonous snakes which were quite likely to infest it. In back of the clearing was a thick tangle of low bushes through which ran a little foot-path. Agnes started down this path carrying a billy can and I offered to go with her, but Albert said, "No, by um by we go, him long way, him only get a little bit now." After one gets used to the pronoun "him" being used to refer to everything animal, vegetable, and mineral, this phrase is perfectly understandable: the first "him" referred to the water, the second to Agnes.

So instead of collecting water, I wandered down to the river bank where Billy-Two, Brownie, and a few of the other men, were busy skinning the crocodiles. This they did by cutting the skin first around the head, then down either side of the rows of bumps running along the spine to the tail. The skin was then carefully peeled and cut from the body. Once free it was rubbed with salt which would act as a preservative until such time as the supply boat would arrive to carry it to Darwin. There the skins would be sold to the dealer and the proceeds credited to the hunter's account or sent in the form of hard cash to the settlement for distribution. Now they were folded into bundles and loaded into the launch, and large

13:Barclay J-3 (ca. 1939)1939 OI20 Tiwi OI20

726 received any serious damage, and it seemed to have been a most enjoyable occasion. An islander, who had seen the world from the decks of many luggers, made a remark that was truer than he knew, "When white feller go to war, he takem rifle, he takem

142
225
227
291
501

HUNTING TURTLE, FROM A DUG-OUT CANOE NEAR BATHURST ISLAND.

bomb. Some feller *must* be killed! White feller ally b——!" It cannot be said that the mission fathers have a dull time at Bathurst Island.

797 There are two sisters of the order at the Mission Station. In addition to teaching the girls, they attend to all household mat-

[p. 18(A)]